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# PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE—WHY?

BY JAMES H. BLOUNT, FORMERLY JUDGE OF FIRST INSTANCE OF  
THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

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THE author of this paper contributed, to the number of this REVIEW for January 18th last, an article concerning our Philippine problem entitled "Philippine Independence—When?" A definite plan for getting out of the Philippines soon and honorably was therein suggested as follows:

"If three strong and able men, familiar with insular conditions, and still young enough to undertake the task—say, for instance, General Leonard Wood, of the Army; Judge Adam C. Carson, of the Philippine Supreme Court; and W. Morgan Shuster, Collector of Customs of the Archipelago; or three other men of like calibre—were told by a President of the United States, by authority of the Congress: 'Go out there and set up a respectable native government in ten years, and then come away,' they could and would do it, and that government would be a success; and one of the greatest moral victories in the annals of free government would have been written by the gentlemen concerned upon the pages of their country's history."

It is a significant fact that, despite the general and apparently chronic torpor into which public interest concerning Philippine affairs was supposed to have lapsed, the article cited attracted considerable attention from the American press. Here was an article, upon a subject of which the public were tired, written by an unknown person in whom the public were not interested. Yet it challenged the attention of the country, because the American people consider the Philippines a costly burden, a nuisance and a danger, and are determined to get rid of them so soon as may be honorably possible. It challenged attention, also, because the writer, after nearly six years' stay in the Islands (1899-1905)—the first two as an officer of the army that subjugated them, and the remainder as a United States Judge—had finally returned

home with the conviction that we ought not to continue to hold the Islands indefinitely, and gave some reasons, not academical, but derived from his personal observations, for the opinion he expressed.\*

The reasons then urged were of two kinds: first, those suggesting themselves when the subject is contemplated from the Oriental end of the line; second, those suggesting themselves at the American end. In discussing the former, the writer alluded to the most humiliating failure upon the part of the civil authorities, in the fall of 1904, to properly protect the lives and property of peaceably inclined people, in that they abstained from calling upon the regular army of the United States to suppress a bloody insurrection which was too serious to be handled by native constabulary. The failure to order out the troops was due to the fear that such action, if cabled to the United States, might, as General Otis's press censor used to say to the war correspondents in the early days, "have the American people by the ears"—that is to say, might hurt the Administration in the Presidential election then approaching by creating at home an impression that "the situation" as to public order was not "well in hand."

In justice to the civil authorities, it should be assumed that, in failing to call upon the military to quell the aforesaid outbreak, they believed that "the greatest good of the greatest number" of Filipinos demanded the retention of the Islands by the United States, and that the correct solution by the American people of this question of retention ought not to be jeopardized in the slightest degree, on the eve of the Presidential election, by using the iron hand of the regular army upon hostile natives engaged in killing friendly natives. What difference would a few natives, more or less, make in the long run, anyhow?

In justice, on the other hand, to the obscure victims of the aforesaid massacres, who perished by reason of this "greatest-

\* Since the publication of Judge Blount's article in the number of the REVIEW for January 18th last, it has been reprinted three times, viz.:

(1) In pamphlet form, for free distribution, at the instance of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. Copies of the Carnegie reprint may be had upon application to the Filipino Progress Association, 150 Nassau Street, New York City.

(2) In the "Congressional Record" of February 12th, 1907 (pp. 2815-2818), at the instance of the Hon. James L. Slayden, of Texas, in the course of a speech in the House of Representatives.

(3) In "The Commoner" of April 19th, 1907, by the Hon. William J. Bryan, of Nebraska, editor and proprietor of that paper.

good-of-the-greatest-number" theory, it is submitted that the first duty of a Government is to protect life and property, from day to day, as far as possible; and, in weighing the capacity of the Filipinos to conduct a government of their own, we should ask ourselves: "Would they kill any more of each other than we have killed, or allowed to be killed, of them?"

The great dead President, Mr. McKinley, in his letter of instructions to the Taft Commission, after quoting the concluding words of the articles of capitulation of the city of Manila, viz., "This city, its inhabitants . . . and its private property of all descriptions . . . are placed under the special safeguard of the faith and honor of the American army," added:

"As high and sacred an obligation rests upon the Government of the United States to give protection for property and life . . . to all the people of the Philippine Islands. . . . I charge this Commission to labor for the full performance of this obligation which concerns the honor and conscience of their country."

No purpose is here entertained to detract from the high character and ability of the small group of distinguished men who, it is believed, were guided, in dealing with the Samar insurrection of 1904, by the belief that they were acting for the greatest good of the greatest number. But that maxim is too ruthless, too Napoleonic, in many of its possible applications, for a Republic safely to follow. After observing what he conceived to be a governmental application of it to the affairs of a very considerable portion of the Philippines, for some time prior to and up to November 8th, 1904, the writer left the vicinity of the Samar massacres on or about that date, bound for Manila, prostrated from overwork in trying to dispose properly of the cases of prisoners likely to die in overcrowded jails. He came to Manila believing that we ought to get out of the Philippines just as soon as any sort of fairly respectable native Government could be set up, whether modelled strictly after our own or not.

"He who comes into a Court of Equity should do so with clean hands." Are not we, as a nation, estopped from denying, before the great tribunal of history, that the Filipinos can conduct a Government which will afford adequate protection for human life, since our own hands are spattered with the blood of innocent people whose lives we could have saved, but did not? Is it not pharisaical for us to claim that a native Government would entail

more unnecessary sacrifice of life *per annum* than the total of what we have *committed* and *permitted*? Should we not cast out the beam from our own eye before attempting to pluck the mote from the eye of "our little brown brother"? Is not the real question, "Can we, in all good conscience, continue to hold the Philippines?" rather than, "Can we honorably turn them loose?"

The reproach of what has happened belongs more or less to all the people of the United States. It demonstrated to the writer beyond a reasonable doubt that a Republic like ours should not colonize, that, as stated in the previous article: "The governing of the Philippines by their supposed friends from the antipodes has been not unlike a game of battledore and shuttlecock between rival political creeds at home, in which the unfortunate inhabitants have been the shuttlecock."

This paper is written in the earnest hope of aiding in convincing a sufficient number of the leading men of both the great political parties that we ought to retire from the Philippines as soon as a decent native Government can be gotten under way.

Everybody in the Army who was in the Philippines at the time knows that the regular troops ought to have been ordered to suppress the Samar insurrection of 1904 long before November 8th, instead of some time afterwards, and that meantime the insurrection spread like a prairie fire and did irreparable and incalculable damage. But concerning such matters a true soldier, of course, is silent, both from duty and from interest—from duty, because he must abide the course taken by his superior officers, the Secretary of War and the President; and from interest, because, if criticisms by him of the War Department reach that Department, his chances of advancement will necessarily be less than those of other ambitious men who have the good sense to hold their peace.

The difficulty which inevitably presents itself to a Republic, like ours, in endeavoring to give a "square deal" to colonial subjects living in a remote part of the world, thus becomes apparent. In a Government by the people, the people should be able to get at all the facts concerning all the issues submitted to them in a political campaign. When a Government by the people starts out to colonize in distant lands, the main body of the evidence they will get, calculated to throw light upon the question of the wisdom and justice of continuing the experiment, will

of necessity come through official sources—that is, from officials of the party which, being in power, seeks to continue itself in power—and will therefore be one-sided, *ex parte*, testimony. No matter how high the character of the responsible heads of such colonial government, they will “let nothing go that will hurt the Administration.”

Such are some of the aspects of the problem, when it is studied from the point of view one gets in the Philippines. “Lest we forget” the condition to which Congress has brought the Filipinos by refusing to substantially reduce the tariff on Philippine products brought to the United States, let us now consider that condition and its significance.

The question of the welfare of the Filipinos is, and always will be, a “side-issue” with the American people. The most famous character of contemporary American fiction, “Misther Dooley,” once said to his friend Mr. Hennessy upon this subject: “Before the Spanish Warr, Hennessy—and it isn’t very different since—the American payple didn’t know, and didn’t care, whether the Philippines wuz islands or a brand of canned gudes.” But a greater than Dooley—President Lincoln—gave utterance, in a different connection, to the eternal truth: “A people who are indifferent to the rights of others cannot, under a just God, long retain their own.”

Said the Manila Chamber of Commerce to the Taft party in August, 1905: “The country is in a state of financial collapse.”\*

Said former Governor-General Ide, in November, 1906:†

“By annexation we killed the Spanish market for Philippine sugar and tobacco, and our tariff shuts these products from the United States market, and to-day both these, the most important in the Islands, are practically prostrated.”

Yet men whose views ought to be helpful, will, in the face of such evidence, blandly and blindly say:

“Our occupation has increased the prosperity of the Islands as never before.”‡

The intense and universal desire of the Filipinos for Independence was dealt with at length in this REVIEW for January 18th last. Very positive opinions on that subject by Congress-

\* Senator Newlands, NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, December, 1905.

† New York “Independent,” November 22nd, 1906.

‡ “New Haven Palladium.”

man Parsons of New York, by Senators Dubois and Newlands, all of the Taft party, and by Captain Moss, of General Corbin's staff, were there set forth. But let us bear always in mind, especially when Japanese or other war clouds lower, what the Senator last above named refers to significantly as:

"The strategic mistake of having possessions occupied by unwilling subjects so far removed from our base—impossible of defence should the time come in the Orient when we may be beset by foes outside the Islands and *by insurrectos within*";

and his reminder that:

"The outbreak of Cuba against Spain was largely due to economic distress caused by the low price of sugar."\*

As Brigadier-General W. H. Carter suggests, in a fine spirit of judicial fairness, in the number of the REVIEW for February 15th:

"Loyalty to the Government should not be expected of any population which, however erroneously, believes itself deprived of equal rights with others living under the same flag."

Says Senator Newlands:

"There can be no permanent friendliness between the Filipinos and the Americans."†

Says Senator Dubois:

"There is no intimacy and no sympathy between the Americans who are in the islands and the natives. . . . They do not regard them as a factor in the future of the country. . . . The natives hate us cordially, and unless some radical change can be brought about, the hatred will grow more and more intense."‡

One American observer expresses the feeling of the Americans in the Islands thus:

"When we have taught them . . . we shall set them free. . . . And yet, when the American looks about him at all the improvements . . . there is a certain feeling of reluctance to hand over the fruits."§

Cannot the editor of the "Christian Advocate," who did me the honor to review at length the previous article concerning the Philippines, and was even kind enough to characterize it as "illuminating," perceive how certain it is that the Filipinos un-

\* Senator Newlands, NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, December, 1905.

† NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, December, 1905.

‡ New York "Tribune," December 17th, 1905.

§ B. K. Daniels, "World's Work," September, 1905.

derstand this arrogant attitude of American business men, and suspect that there must be some ground for it? The Filipino is told by us that we expect to remain with him indefinitely. Is it not natural for him, in view of this attitude of Americans out there, to believe that our real purpose is to remain with him permanently; and will he not continue to believe so, unless we make a specific disclaimer of any intention permanently to exercise sovereignty over his country, and give him a definite promise of independence?

But let us cease for the moment to criticise the Congress for its sins of omission and commission against these Oriental subjects, and consider a reason, more elemental than taxation without representation and unjust tariffs, for the unpleasant but undeniable fact that the Filipinos like us infinitely less than they did the Spaniards. What Mr. Roosevelt said in 1889 in his "Winning of the West," concerning the French of the Ohio Valley before 1776, in regard to their cordial social relations with the natives, is true of all Latin races always under like circumstances, and suggests another strong reason why the Spaniards were liked in the Philippines far better than are their successors in sovereignty:

"They were not trammelled by the queer pride which makes a man of English stock unwilling to make a red-skinned woman his wife, though anxious enough to make her his concubine."\*

Men of English stock have changed but little in the matter of race instinct since 1776. Yet among men to whom the country looks for suggestion and the moulding of public opinion, we sometimes find such utter misapprehension of conditions in the Philippines that only unpleasant reading like the above will give them pause. Said the "Rochester Democrat-Chronicle" last July:

"The industrial and business classes, those who desire peace and order . . . are not eager for independence. On the contrary, they have uttered earnest protests," etc.

The "Washington Star" asks: "Has Judge Blount learned no lesson from Cuba?" The answer to this question is suggested by the foregoing demonstration that a leading daily newspaper of the State of New York is totally in the dark about the Philippines, whereas it never could be so about Cuban affairs.

\* Volume I, p. 41.



Whether Cuba, and her ugly race problem, ought to be annexed or not, she lies in the Western Hemisphere, right at our door, so that the afternoon papers can acquaint us with what happens each morning, and public opinion can operate as it did on the life-insurance companies. Gibbon said, somewhere, that "remoteness softens the cries of distress." As to every great public question, with the exception of the Philippines, the American voter can form a *first-hand* opinion, according to the spirit and genius, the vital principle, of our institutions. As to the Philippines, he must rely upon *ex parte* information from the party in power seeking to continue in power. Besides, we owe Cuba a duty under the Monroe Doctrine.

Furthermore, if we forbid European Powers to colonize in the Western Hemisphere, it follows, as a corollary, that we should cease to colonize in the Eastern Hemisphere. We should be warned by the decline and fall of the Roman Empire — due, largely, as the greatest of all historians tells, to the failure to follow the advice contained in Augustus Cæsar's will, which he therein bequeathed, as a valuable legacy to his successors, viz., that they should "confine the Empire within those limits which nature seemed to have fixed as its natural bulwarks and boundaries."

In February, 1902, Judge Taft said to the Senate Committee on Philippine Affairs, with that good-humored tolerance of criticism which comes only from genuine and entire confidence in the soundness of one's views: "I have been called the Mark Tapley of this Philippine business." After something over three years more of trying to administer the affairs of those remote wards, in a way at once just to them and consistent with the fundamental principles of our Government, we find him admitting at Washington in May, 1905,\* that "we blundered into colonization."

The "trade-expansion" argument boldly presented by Senator Lodge to the Republican National Convention of 1900—"We make no hypocritical pretence of being interested in the Philippines solely on account of others. . . . We believe in trade expansion"—was thus recognized as a delusion and a snare. It had become evident to all that the Philippines would not pay.

\* Address before National Geographical Society; see "National Geographic Magazine," August, 1905.

About the same time, Mr. J. J. Hill, of the Great Northern Railway, who also controls the steamship company of the same name which connects with the railway at Seattle, changed the Oriental terminus of his steamships from Manila to Hong-Kong, because "it did not pay to stop at Manila."

In June, 1905, or thereabouts, the "Washington Post" was saying, substantially, with commendable, if cynical, honesty, that all this talk about "benevolent assimilation" was the rankest casuistry, and that we took the Philippines because we believed they would pay; and on November 2nd, 1906, we find it using this language: "An honorable exit from Oriental sovereignty is the almost universal wish of the people of the United States."

The Congress of the United States has invariably turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the Administration concerning the extreme economical distress to which the Filipinos have been reduced by the Dingley Tariff. Time and again the several Governors-General, the Secretary of War and the President have urged that the tariff on Philippine sugar and tobacco imported into the United States should be reduced to 25 per cent. of the Dingley Tariff, and as often have the measures introduced for that benevolent purpose been killed or died in committee-room at Washington. Why? Because the Philippines are not a State of the American Union and never will be—and ought not to be—and therefore have not, and never will have, representatives in Congress, as have all other people living under the protection of the American flag and all other interests affected by the legislation of the American Congress. So long as we retain them, they will continue to suffer in one way or another from taxation without representation, or from the enactment or defeat of laws of one sort or another at the instance of special interests at home. If the administration of President Roosevelt, with all its unprecedented strength with the people, cannot get through Congress tariff legislation opening to Philippine planters of sugar-cane and tobacco an avenue of escape from the financial drought which at present afflicts them, is it not the duty of his great War Secretary to cease to block the way of Philippine Independence?

Sugar-cane and tobacco are to the Philippines what cotton is to the South. And in the South, as the reader is doubtless aware, when the price of cotton is depressed, money "tightens," merchants fail, banks tremble and gloom pervades every household.

The Administration will, no doubt, continue the fight at the next session of Congress. If it succeeds, we shall at last have done something for the Filipino, at least so far as regards his material welfare, but incidentally we shall have lessened incalculably the chances of ultimate Philippine Independence.

Secretary Taft stated the case for the Filipino people, early in 1905, as follows:

"I sincerely hope that next year Congress will reduce the tariff to nothing on all goods produced in the Philippine Islands, except tobacco and sugar, and reduce that to 25 per cent., merely to justify our putting a duty in the Philippines against you until 1909, in order that the Government may be supported and not lose that revenue until that time. And then, when 1909 comes and we are released from the necessity, under the treaty of Paris, of giving the same privileges to Spain as to the United States, then we can have complete free trade between the Islands and America."\*

To this Senator Newlands replies:

"Such a proposition involves the closed door in the Philippines at a time when we are strenuously urging the open door in China, Manchuria and Korea. This is both wrong and impolitic—wrong, because consistency is required of nations as well as of individuals; and impolitic, because it will give Japan and China an excuse for securing favored arrangements in the Orient, which will exclude our products. If we get the monopoly of imports into the Philippines, it would not compensate for the losses which we would sustain in the rest of the Orient by the assertion of this policy. If we refuse equal opportunities for Japanese trade, in the Philippines, how can we insist upon equal opportunities with Japan in Manchuria and Korea?"†

Which of these views will prevail? In any event, does not the irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the guardian and those of the ward make it our duty to relinquish the guardianship, when it is hardly conceivable that the ward could be any worse off if left to himself?

According to a very able, patient and interesting presentation of our Oriental expenditures, by the Washington correspondent of the New York "Evening Post," in the issue of that paper for March 6th last, the cost of the Philippine government to the United States Treasury, since the close of the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1898, has been more than \$300,000,000. How little need of a Railroad-Rate Bill there would have been, had that sum

\* "National Geographic Magazine," August, 1905.

† NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, December, 1905.

been put into the improvement of American Rivers and Harbors and interior waterways, instead of being worse than wasted upon this South Sea Bubble of ours.

The article in the "Post," to which allusion has just been made, states a fact which it is very probable that few people in the United States know, but which is of the first importance, viz.: that on October 25th, 1904, at Newark, New Jersey, Secretary Taft himself admitted that the cost of the Islands to us up to that date had been more than \$200,000,000. The cost of the Philippine government to the Filipino people is so enormous that the Secretary of War thought proper to answer a criticism to that effect by a British writer on colonial government. In explaining why a simpler and less expensive form of government was not adopted, the present elaborately articulated governmental structure was thus justified: "It adds to the expense, and it does not give them so good a government." "But what we are trying to do is to teach these people by object-lessons" how to run a government for themselves—instead of giving them a chance to practise the art of responsible government—which is as manifest error as if you undertook to teach a boy how to ride a bicycle by letting him watch you ride. The Secretary then goes on to say:

"It is perfectly true that that government there could be much more efficient if we put an American in charge of each province, and made him absolute ruler there. It would not be any trouble to do it at all. We would have less taxes, the work would be attended to with more care, and, on the whole, for the next ten or fifteen years it is probable that the people would be in better condition."

Why not, then, make the condition of the people better at once, in the way indicated, or at least along those general lines, and leave a little of the future to the Lord? The answer is:

"They would not have any responsibility about the government. They would not be subject to scolding at every mouth by the officers above them."

It is only the very general disposition on the part of our people to consider Secretary Taft well-nigh infallible—a mistake due to his well-known courage, ability, kindness and tact—which enables him to keep the present generation of Filipinos in poverty and want, in order that their posterity may, in the fulness of time, "secure the blessings of liberty."

Half of the seven and one-half millions of people in the

Philippines live on the island of Luzon. The northern half of Luzon, that part lying above the Pasig River, at whose mouth Manila is, can be gotten ready within twelve months' time for such a government as New Mexico now has—an ordinary Territorial form of government, entirely autonomous within itself, by a man like the Hon. George Currie, formerly Governor of Isabela Province in Luzon, later Governor of Samar, and more recently appointed Governor of New Mexico. There is almost immediately available material for at least three such Territories in the northern half of Luzon, viz.: (1) The Ilocano country (North Ilcoos, South Ilcoos and La Union), containing about half a million people; (2) The Cagayan valley, containing nearly a quarter of a million; (3) The Railroad and Rio Grande country (the country traversed by the Manila and Dagupan Railroad, and drained by the Rio Grande de Pampanga, consisting of five provinces, to wit, Bulacan, Pampanga, Pangasinan, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija), containing about a million and a quarter. If the inhabitants of these three regions were told by a man whom they liked and would believe, as they would Currie, that they were to have autonomous government like one of the Western Territories of the United States, at the very earliest possible moment, and urged to get ready for it, they could and would, under his guidance. We would get a cooperation from those people we do not now get and never will get, so long as we keep them in uncertainty as to what we are going to do with them. If next year we should formally disclaim intention to retain the islands permanently, and set to work to create autonomous Territories destined ultimately to be States of a Federated Philippine Republic, whenever fit, we would soon see the way out of this tangle, and behold the beginning of the end of it.

The "New York Times," while insisting that the Filipinos are unfit to govern themselves, very frankly admits that "our administration of the Philippines has convinced . . . all mankind of our unfitness to govern them," and it adds:

"Having taken them, we shall all be delighted with any possible and honorable method of getting rid of what we have shown we do not know how to administer to our own satisfaction or to that of any party in interest. The American people would hail the discovery of a decent 'way out.' But they will continue to decline to recognize as such a way the path indicated by Mr. Bryan and Judge Blount of turning the Filipinos loose upon mankind [mark the next words], with the guarantee

of the United States of their Independence against all comers, and with a like guarantee against their abuse of their Independence, amounting to an assumption by us of all international claims for damages against the Filipino Republic."

If the editor of the "Times" will read again the article to which the above is part of his reply, he will see that no such guarantee was proposed, but only "a treaty with the great nations, securing the neutralization of the Islands, and the recognition of their independence whenever the same shall be granted to them by the United States." This is nothing more than was done by the great Powers of Europe, in the first half of the nineteenth century, with regard to Switzerland and Belgium. It will be remembered that, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, England served notice on both parties to the conflict that, if either attempted to violate the territorial integrity of Belgium, she would join forces with the other. If so requested by the Congress, President Roosevelt could and doubtless would negotiate such a treaty. It would be in harmony both with his own views and with those of all friends of progress throughout the world in this wonderful and hopeful age, for it would reduce by that much the possible area of war.

JAMES H. BLOUNT.